

Creoloid phenomena in the Spanish of transitional bilinguals

John M. Lipski

1. Introduction

The study of the non-immigrant varieties of United States Spanish has usually revolved around the combination of nonstandard regional/archaic variants and the penetration of Anglicisms in vocabulary and syntax. From a pedagogical perspective, attention has been directed at spelling, grammatical subtleties such as subjunctive usage and conditional sentences, and elimination of obvious lexical and syntactic Anglicisms. The majority of textbooks and supplementary materials work on the assumption that the Spanish speakers in question are in full control of the basic structures of the language, while hopelessly enmeshed in nonstandard variants which must be dealt with in some fashion. Finally, those few attempts at identifying possible systematic differences between United States Spanish and contemporary dialects in the respective countries of origin have concentrated once more on lexical Anglicisms and on the extension of regional use of certain constructions. The results have been inconclusive, and despite the vast amount of research and materials produced for bilingual education and proficiency testing programs, there is no consensus as to the routes of evolution of the Spanish language in the United States, or of the methods of classifying degrees of abilities among U. S. Spanish speakers.¹ Outside of the U. S., the opinion is general that nearly all forms of U. S. Spanish are in some way distinguished from Spanish as spoken in monolingual regions, in fashions attributed to the incursions of English as well as to the inferior sociolinguistic position of Spanish vis-à-vis English. Objective studies carried out within the U. S. reveal a much wider range of variation, whose highest level is indistinguishable from Spanish as spoken throughout Latin America, and some enthusiastic defenders of U. S. Spanish have even gone to the (scientifically unsustainable) extreme of claiming that no essential differences are found between *any* varieties of U. S. Spanish and those found in other

countries, and that claims to the contrary reflect neocolonial and imperialistic attitudes toward the Spanish language and persons of Hispanic origin.

Despite significant applications of quantitative and variational methodology, it is not always possible to separate the overlapping domains of English structural transfer, prior existence of archaic/non-standard forms arising outside the United States, and the general results of language erosion. As a consequence, there is still no consensus as to whether each ethnically singular dialect of U. S. Spanish is to be described as a fundamentally homogeneous continuum ranging from total fluency in comparison with the respective countries of origin to somewhat substandard usage, or whether two essentially discrete categories are represented. The following remarks do not pretend to offer a definitive answer to this thorny problem, but rather to suggest that, in the description of U. S. Spanish, more attention be directed to the lower end of the proficiency scale, the vestigial Spanish speakers.

2. Language erosion and the "transitional bilingual"

2.1. The discovery of the "semi-speaker"

Recent work in language death in minority language-speaking communities (e. g. Gaelic in Scotland, Hindi and Spanish and Trinidad, Spanish in the Philippines, and Sephardic Spanish in many regions of the world) has given rise to the technical definition of the *semi-speaker*, as distinguished both from the fluent bilingual or monolingual speaker of the language in question, and from foreign or beginning speakers of the language.² Semifluent speakers are typically characterized by a highly lopsided competence-performance ratio, being able to recognize and process nearly all varieties of the language in question (including jokes, nonstandard dialect forms, slurred and distorted speech), and also able to sustain nominally acceptable conversations in the language, while committing mistakes immediately recognized and seldom if ever committed by true native speakers. Such speakers are thus superior in linguistic ability to rudimentary speakers who "know a few words" of a given language through contact with older relatives, neighbors, etc., and are also superior to all but the most experienced foreign language learners. Errors committed by semifluent speakers, on the other hand,

more typically fall in line with those of foreign learners, at times being found also in native child language, and set this group apart from relatively balanced bilinguals. In the ontogenesis of semifluent speakers, there is usually a shift away from a minority language to the national/majority language within the space of a single generation or at most two, signalled by a transitional generation of "vestigial" speakers who spoke the language in question during their childhood but who have subsequently lost much of their native ability, and for true *transitional bilinguals* (TB), a more neutral term which will be used henceforth. TB speakers are usually the children of vestigial or even full speakers of the dying language, whose passive abilities approximate those of native speakers, but who never learned a full form of the language (Dorian 1977, Lipski 1985d).

2.2. Transitional bilinguals in the United States

In the United States setting, the rapid linguistic assimilation of immigrant and native minority-language families has yielded thousands of TB speakers, but the phenomenon is normally transitory, arising spontaneously in each individual or group-level case of language shift. Such TB speakers rarely communicate with wider groups (or with each other) in the respective original languages, and to the extent that the immigrant language is maintained for a time in a significant speech community, these speakers have little or no effect on language usage within that community. In the case of Hispanic groups in the United States, however, the situation is substantially different in most cases. Whereas there exist a few tiny communities of long standing where Spanish as an ancestral language is rapidly disappearing, Spanish as a viable language is widespread in this country, and even in areas geographically removed from large Spanish-speaking groups, Spanish speakers have access to various forms of the Spanish language, through public media, travel opportunities, and a nationwide awareness of some aspects of Spanish. At the same time, within individual families as well as in entire neighborhoods and larger community segments, language shifts away from Spanish are commonplace in many regions of the United States, including areas characterized by large and stable Hispanic populations as well as continued immigration from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.³

The existence of such language shifts embedded in wider segments of nominally bilingual regions has produced an unspecified but large pool

of vestigial or TB Spanish speakers, whose passive linguistic skills rival those of true native speakers, and whose active production in Spanish falls between the standard definition of TB speakers and the total proficiency of the fluent native speaker. Despite the study of marginal Spanish speakers in the United States (e. g. the *Isleños* of Louisiana and the Sabine River Spanish speakers of Texas and Louisiana), and the overlapping study of Spanish to English shifts among larger Hispanic populations, theoretical assessments derived from vestigial and TB speakers have rarely been applied to the Spanish language as used by individuals of Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban origin who for whatever reason fall into the TB category. There is not even a rough estimate of the proportion of TB Spanish speakers in the United States, either in the school systems or in society as a whole, nor is there an adequate linguistic definition of vestigial or TB status. In the present remarks, attention will be directed at the TB Spanish as produced by bilingual speakers of Mexican (MX), Puerto Rican (PR) and Cuban (CU) origin living within the United States, although initial comparison with data collected from TB speakers from other backgrounds (including Central American, Argentine, Colombian and peninsular Spanish) has revealed no significant differences in vestigial Spanish usage as correlated with country or dialect of origin (Lipski 1985 d).

The situations which produce TB vestigial speakers vary widely, but include moves away from Spanish-speaking neighborhoods or communities, mixed-ethnic marriages where only one partner speaks Spanish, or conditions of social mobility or individual choice which results in a decision not to employ Spanish among individuals capable of doing so, and to not teach the language to their children. There is no preferred geographical locus for TB speakers: many are naturally found in regions where immigration of Spanish speakers has been sporadic and has not occurred recently (as in many midwestern states), or in isolated groups where formerly monolingual Spanish usage has given rise to English dominance. Even larger numbers are found in rural regions of the south-west where Spanish language usage is still strong, and in the major cities of the same region. The data for the present study were collected in Houston, where as much as one third of the (non-official) population speaks some form of Spanish; comparative data have also been collected from urban New Jersey and New York, rural Michigan, Los Angeles, and Miami, which indicate a situation similar enough to that of Houston in sociolinguistic terms as to warrant general conclusions. For purposes of illustration, a few examples will be included from marginal vestigial

dialects culturally and geographically far removed from the three major U. S. Hispanic groups: the *Isleños* of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana (IS), vestigial Spanish of the Caribbean island of Trinidad (TR), and vestigial (non-creole) Philippine Spanish (PH).

3. Defining the Spanish transitional bilingual

3.1. Environmental variables

It is difficult to arrive at a non-circular definition of a TB Spanish speaker, if one considers certain speech forms or error-types as definitory for this category. The only reasonable approximation to a usable working definition involves external observations or self-assessed Spanish language ability as well as longitudinal behavior. In the case of the TB speaker of Spanish in a typical United States setting (e. g. urban or suburban environment, availability of at least a small Hispanic population in the midst of a predominantly Anglo-American setting, no bilingual or Spanish-dominant educational programs), at least the following combination of features give a reasonable prediction of TB status:

- (1) Little or no school training in Spanish, particularly in classes for English-speaking students;
- (2) Spanish was spoken in earliest childhood either as the only language of the home or in conjunction with English;
- (3) A rapid shift from Spanish to English occurred before adolescence, involving the individual in question, immediate family members and or the surrounding speech community;
- (4) Subsequent use of Spanish is confined to conversation with a few relatives (typically quasi-monolingual Spanish speakers of the grandparents' generation);
- (5) When addressed in Spanish by individuals known to be bilingual, TB speakers often respond wholly or partially in English, thus giving rise to asymmetrical conversations;
- (6) There is no strong identification with the Spanish language as a positive component of Hispanic identity. Individuals' feelings toward the latter ethnic group range from mildly favorable (but with no strong desire to retain the Spanish language) to openly hostile and pessimistic.

3.2. Differences with respect to fluent bilinguals

Naturally, these features are neither necessary nor sufficient to define TB speakers, but there is a very high rate of coincidence between the above-mentioned factors and linguistic behavior typical of vestigial Spanish speakers. In contrast to this group, true native Spanish speakers or fluent bilinguals differ systematically in the following fashions:

- (1) There has never been a total shift from Spanish to English on the part of the speaker and the immediate family, although the linguistic profile of the surrounding environment may have changed through language shift or geographical displacement;
- (2) Speakers' knowledge of English may be quite limited, although completely fluent bilinguals can also fall into this category.
- (3) Fluent Spanish speakers routinely hold conversations in Spanish, with friends and family members, and take advantage of Spanish-language radio, television, films and community events.
- (4) Self-concept is usually positive as regards Hispanic identity; while there may be no active drive to retain the Spanish language, these speakers use it naturally and spontaneously.

The two Spanish-speaking groups are naturally separated from the second-language group through the circumstances of initial language acquisition, although many individuals who have learned Spanish as a true second language speak it as frequently as do native speakers. The features just enumerated will serve as the basis for a tentative classification, and ultimately for a correlation between error-types and speaker status.

For the purposes of the present pilot study, a total of 45 informants was chosen, all residing in the metropolitan Houston area. The sample was evenly divided among the three categories of fluent Spanish speaker/bilingual (15), TB speaker or vestigial Spanish speaker (15) and Anglo-American who has learned Spanish as a second language (15). In each case, determination of the category was done entirely through an informally obtained personal biography as to the circumstances in which Spanish and English were learned and used; there was no assessment of Spanish language abilities made at this stage, in order to avoid circularity.⁴

4. Linguistic characteristics of Spanish transitional bilinguals

It is difficult to offer an empirically sustainable linguistic definition of vestigial or TB Spanish speakers, as opposed to fluent bilinguals, although paragon cases of TB usage are readily recognized as such by fluent speakers of Spanish. A non-exhaustive but highly representative set of linguistic characteristics of vestigial Spanish usage includes the following categories, examples of which are found in the speech of nearly all individuals regarded as TB speakers of Spanish:

4.1. Instability of nominal and adjectival inflection

One of the most difficult aspects for learners of Spanish as a second language to master is the inflection of adjectives for gender and number. Native Spanish speakers, including true bilinguals whose Spanish exhibits massive English structural and lexical interference, virtually never commit errors of adjectival inflection. Vestigial Spanish speakers are aligned more with second language learners as regards adjectival inflection, for errors of gender and number concord are quite frequent. Some examples from the present corpus include:

- (1) *mi blusa es blanco* (MX)
tenemos un casa allá (MX)
¿Cuál es tu favorito parte? (CU)
decían palabras que eran inglés (PR)
ehta décima fue composio [compuesta] pol mi tío (IS)
un rata ansina (IS)
ahora tiene casa[s] uno sobre otro (TR)
no quieren ser español (PH)
hay cosas que son más común a francés (PR)
que me pegaran por ningún razón (PR)

4.2. Incorrectly conjugated verb forms

In TB Spanish, third person verb forms are frequently substituted for first or second person forms; other less systematic substitutions also occur. Native Spanish speakers do not commit genuine paradigmatic

errors of verb conjugation. Found among some Hispanic bilinguals in the United States is a gradual abandonment of the subjunctive mood in certain constructions, in favor of a uniform use of the indicative. However, only vestigial Spanish speakers (as well as foreign language learners) consistently commit errors of person, tending toward but never reaching the canonical use of third person singular and plural forms for all singular and plural verb forms, respectively. Examples from the present corpus include:

- (2) *yo bailo y come* (MX)
viene mis tíos del rancho d'él (MX)
se m'olvida muchas palabra (CU)
yo tiene cuarenta ocho año (TR)
yo no sabe bien (TR)
nosotro saben trabajá junto (IS)
cuando vino los japoneses (PH)
Omar y yo eh mucho amigo (CU)
mi mamá y mi papá eh bueno (PR)
esos pajaritos se metió adentro (PR)
un lugar tan grande donde nadie conozco a nadie (MX)
ellos fue allá (MX)

4.3. Incorrect use of definite and indefinite articles

Common in TB Spanish is the elimination of articles required in standard usage. Popular Spanish worldwide is characterized by inconsistent use of articles in certain contexts, but cardinal cases are rarely altered. Fluent Spanish-English bilinguals similarly maintain standard usage of articles, except for occasional introduction of superfluous indirect articles to indicate simple existence (e.g. *mi tío es [un] médico* 'my uncle is a doctor'). TB speakers, on the other hand, frequently employ articles in fashions which deviate significantly from usage among fluent native Spanish speakers, but which are at times found among foreign language learners (Plann 1979, Gonzo-Saltarelli 1979). Some examples are:

- (3) *cuando tú deja [la] música* (PR)
[el] español es muy bonita[o] (PR)
me gusta [las] clases como pa escribir (CU)
yo iba a [la] escuela (MX)
lo único inglés que ellos saben aprendieron en [la] escuela (MX)

- él va a buscar el [Ø] trabajo en agosto* (PR)
tengo miedo de [los] examens (MX)
no ponen [los] zapato en la mesa (IS)
[la] crihtofina cogió [el] puehto del cacao (TR)
está arriba, fuera de[l] tráfico (PH)

4.4. Errors of prepositional usage

Nonstandard popular Spanish exhibits an extraordinary variety of deviations from standard prepositional usage, usually involving substitution prepositions. Fluent native Spanish speakers never delete prepositions, except in cases of phonetic erosion, and even prepositional substitutions are usually constrained along regional lines. TB Spanish speakers frequently shift prepositions in fashions not found among fluent speakers, and often eliminate *de*, *a*, and occasionally other prepositions. Some examples are:

- (4) *¿Tienes oportunidades en hablar el español?* (CU)
hoy etamo [a] siete (PR)
vamos a estar más cerca a la familia d'él (PR)
Voy a hablar de las comidas [de] Bélgica (MX)
comenzaba [en] setiembre (IS)
ya recibirá carta [de] Ehpaña (IS)
si uté pasa [la] casa [de] Lili (TR)
mi yerno es descendiente [de] italiano (PH)

4.5. Categorical use of redundant subject pronouns

In theory, subject pronouns are redundant in Spanish in those cases where verb forms or other elements permit semantic identification of the subject. In practice, usage varies widely; for example, in the Caribbean and in southern Spain, where word-final consonants are frequently eroded, use of subject pronouns is considerably more common to compensate lost morphological material (Rosengren 1974, Mondéjar 1970, Silva-Corvalán 1982). TB speakers differ from even speakers of phonologically radical dialects in their preference for categorical usage of subject pronouns, even using two non-coreferential pronouns in the same sentence, something virtually impossible among fluent Spanish speakers. Some examples are:

- (5) *yo sé las palabras pero cuando yo tengo que encontrar las palabras es cuando yo tengo problemas* (MX)
ello[s] venden y ello[s] van (CU)
yo lo hablo onde yo quiero (PR)
cuando ella termina, ella tiene que tirá el agua (IS)
cuando ello₁ hablo[an], ello₂ comprenden (TR)
yo tengo do sijo; yo tengo a Al y yo tengo a Paul (IS)
Yo fui la mayor y yo no me acuerdo que yo hablaba inglés cuando comencé la escuela (MX)
Yo quiero decir cariño pero yo no sé si es eso (MX)
Nojotros tratamos de que vaya otra persona más que nosotros porque nojotros estamos para aquí (MX)
Yo decidí ser maestra porque yo estuve trabajando con niños y yo pensé que yo podía hacer lo mismo (MX)
Yo aprendí francés, yo tomé francés por tres años, pero yo no sé hablar muy bueno porque yo lo perdí todo. Si yo pudiera, yo quería aprender todas las lenguas, para que yo, cuando yo vaya a un país, yo misma pueda hablar (PR)
Ella₁ hablaba el inglés que ella₁ sabía (CU)
Yo voy y yo nado y yo visito mis amigos y mi abuela (CU).

4.6. 'Backwards anaphora in TB Spanish

Also found in the speech of many TB Spanish speakers is the use of a redundant subject pronoun which stands in anaphoric relation to a (usually preceding) dropped pronoun, a usage which is clearly proscribed in fluent varieties of Spanish, when no contrastive emphasis is intended. This behavior may reflect English usage, i. e. the intersection of obligatory subject pronouns in English and the results of PRO-drop in Spanish, with highly varied results. Some examples from the present corpus (none of which was used in a context suggesting contrastive emphasis) are:

- (6) *alguien me habla en español y puedo entender pero yo contesto en inglés* (MX)
creo que yo tengo bastantes problemas con la gramática (MX)
no pude creer que yo ha hecho esos errores
Ø₁ tenía muy buena recomendación pa que él₁ siguiera con la carrera de electrónica (MX)

Pa que Ø₁ no le tengan miedo a nuo y sigan ellos₁ adelante (MX)
Allá Ø₁ te pagan, y si ellos₁ no gustan cómo estás jugando, Ø₁ te dicen (MX)

This departure from Spanish grammatical restrictions among TB speakers suggests an eventual parameterization of TB speech in terms of pronominal reference, but the high degree of inter-speaker variability in this dimension makes it unlikely that a stable parametric difference will ever become established. Among TB speakers, the pronoun *yo* is most frequently retained in redundant contexts, followed by *nosotros*; these same pronouns are the most frequent of occurrence. The examples in the present corpus suggest not a totally random occurrence of redundant pronouns in conjunction with a preceding/c-commanding dropped pronoun, but rather a variable insertion of redundant pronouns following what the speaker perceives as a pause, shift of topic or momentarily emphatic construction. Objectively, a pause or other juncture is usually not present, which suggests yet another possibility, namely pronoun deletion in short stereotyped combinations (e. g. *creo que* 'I believe'). In light of the (admittedly limited) data collected to date, the most reasonable hypothesis is that TB speakers have acquired a rudimentary form of the pro-drop parameter in Spanish, namely the possibility for eliminating subject pronouns (and the obligatory dropping of PRO with impersonal constructions involving *haber*), but have not acquired, or have partially lost, the ancillary co-occurrence restrictions which preclude the existence of an expressed pronoun with a dropped antecedent.⁵

5. Refining the definition of "transitional bilingual"

5.1. Behavioral diagnostics

The preceding sections have given evidence that vestigial and TB Spanish speakers consistently produce errors rarely if ever found among fluent native speakers, even fluent bilinguals whose Spanish contains much structural interference from English. The categories just described combine to define the linguistic behavior of vestigial Spanish speakers. Of these categories, (1) and (2) appear to be exclusive to vestigial speakers (except in very occasional and well-monitored slips among fluent native speakers), and are at the same time found among nearly all vestigial

speakers. Category (5), involving categorical use of redundant subject pronouns, non-coreferential pronouns in the same sentence and repetition of coreferential subject pronouns, is nearly exclusive to vestigial speakers (being found occasionally among fluent bilinguals who exhibit structural inference from English), but on the other hand, is not found among all vestigial speakers. Category (6), representing anaphoric violations, is normally found only among TB and foreign speakers of Spanish. Categories (3) and (4) exhibit differential behavior between vestigial speakers and bilinguals with interference from English, being very frequent in the former group and very infrequent among the latter speakers. Both sets of phenomena are found among nearly all vestigial/TB speakers. Table 1 summarizes the interaction between the categories and the three principal groups of Spanish speakers represented in the United States: monolingual Spanish speakers or fluent bilinguals whose Spanish contains virtually no structural interference from English; bilinguals exhibiting significant structural interference from English; and vestigial Spanish speakers. The categories in Table 1 represent target values defining the "ideal" TB speakers.

Table 1. Structural features of U. S. Spanish speakers

FEATURE	fluent Spanish speakers	bilingual with English interference	vestigial/TB Spanish speakers
(1) Unstable adjectival inflection	NEVER	NEVER	ALWAYS
(2) Unstable verb conjugation (for person)	NEVER	NEVER	ALWAYS
(3) categorical use of subject pro.	NEVER	NEVER	FREQUENT
(4) anaphoric pro. violations	NEVER	NEVER	FREQUENT
(5) errors/elision of prepositions	NEVER	VERY RARELY	FREQUENT
(6) errors/elision of articles	NEVER	VERY RARELY	FREQUENT

The implicational relationships defined in Table 1 are subject to considerable intersubjective variation, but taken as a whole are effective in differentiating true bilingual Spanish speakers from the majority of both TB speakers and individuals who have learned Spanish as a second

language in post-adolescence. Refinement of the basic implicational scales to include detailed quantitative data will provide more accurate measures of the true extent of bilingual capacities in given individuals, while at the same time delimiting the potential accuracy of the implicational scales for diagnostic and evaluative purposes.

5.2. Patterns of morphological reduction

The data from vestigial and second language speakers of Spanish initial suggest a hierarchy of morphological reduction, which in the case of nouns and adjectives is roughly as follows, with the highest order of precedence at the top:

masculine singular
masculine plural
feminine singular
feminine plural

In the case of verbs, the suggested hierarchy is:

third person singular
third person plural
first/second person singular and plural.

These patterns have been noted for foreigner talk worldwide (Ferguson 1975, 1977, Ferguson-DeBose 1977), but it is less usual, however, to find these forms characterizing the speech of what are in essence native speakers of Spanish.

5.3. Implications for pidgin/creole theories

Also of significance are the implications of TB speaker behavior for theories of creole and pidgin formation (cf. Lipski 1985d). A principle feature of creole languages (particularly those based on Romance languages) is the partial or total elimination of morphological inflection, including nouns, verbs and adjectives. Similar morphological reduction is found among Latin Americans and Africans who use Spanish as a de facto language.⁶ The languages in contact with Spanish areas vary widely in terms of morphosyntactic structures, and there is also a great range of circumstances in which Spanish is learned and used, as well as attitudes

toward its usage. The error-types however, are similar across significant temporal and geographical expanses, which adds substance to the notion that the interference of specific native-language structures is less important than difficulties related to the acquisition of the Spanish morphological patterns.

6. Social and pedagogical implications

6.1. The pedagogical mismatch

Morphological and syntactic instability of the sort demonstrated above has not usually been associated with individuals classifiable as native Spanish speakers. The majority of course outlines, syllabi, textbooks and supplementary materials directed at the teaching of Spanish for Spanish speakers focus on the fluent bilingual, whose deviation from textbook Spanish lies in the area of archaic/popular forms and a high percentage of Anglicisms. As a consequence, the concomitant pedagogical materials involve teaching of standard spelling and use of diacritics, elimination of Anglicisms and extirpation of nonstandard archaic and rustic forms. While entry-level Spanish grammatical paradigms are often presented (e. g. verb conjugations, use of definite and indefinite articles, adjectival agreement, and so forth), these presentations are schematic and meant only as a reference tool, making explicit for the first time grammatical nomenclature and systematizing facts which speakers already possess on an intuitive level. The only grammatical areas covered in detail involve those fringe areas (use of past subjunctive and perfect subjunctive tenses, conditional tense, certain relative pronouns and comparative forms) where vulgar usage deviates significantly from widely accepted patterns. On the other hand, textbooks directed at the foreign (English-speaking) student adopt the realistic perspective that not only specific grammatical facts but also the very organization of paradigms of conjugations, agreement, etc. are unknown to the student and need to be presented slowly, systematically and with much repetition and backsliding. In particular, the concepts of highly inflected verbs, nouns, articles and adjectives are presented via extensive rote memory practice as well as numerous practical examples, rather than taking the point of view of an already existent conceptual system, which is suffering gradual erosion.

The pedagogical results of attempting to teach Spanish vestigial or TB speakers using conventional materials are usually quite unsatisfactory, except in the case of unusually motivated students or highly inventive teachers. The use of materials designed for the monolingual English speaker who has no intuition about Spanish grammatical structures is guaranteed to bore the vestigial or TB speaker of Spanish, who at the same time resists learning grammatical terminology and extensive lists and paradigms which describe something which is already known implicitly, albeit with errors and inconsistencies. TB speakers who are convinced that they completely control the structures in question refuse to modify their own production in such areas as nominal concordance, use of articles and prepositions and verb conjugations; even when they are aware of discrepancies between accepted norms and their own usage, vestigial speakers may fail to perceive errors in their own production, due to an imperfectly developed linguistic feedback mechanism in Spanish. As a result, vestigial speakers as a group may do more poorly than monolingual English-speaking students in terms of test scores and overall grades, despite possessing highly superior abilities in both listening comprehension and fluent conversation, not to mention total vocabulary and command of authentic colloquial expressions. Naturally, after receiving unrealistically low grades, such individuals are unlikely to continue the formal study of Spanish, and thus a potentially fluent and educated bilingual is turned into a discouraged and disappointed student who may actually develop or increase negative attitudes toward the Spanish language.

The vestigial or TB speaker of Spanish is equally at a disadvantage when using text materials designed for fluent bilingual speakers or those who are actually Spanish-dominant, for these materials usually stress nonstandard usage which falls entirely within the realm of production by true native speakers, rather than with ungrammatical structures frequently used by TB speakers may or may not use the nonstandard forms in question, but in any event they need additional reinforcement in the areas of grammatical agreement and sentence structure which are entirely superfluous for most true bilinguals, regardless of level of formal education in Spanish. The strong emphasis on spelling and reading strategies for bilingual students may be a bit premature for vestigial speakers, who still need to concentrate their efforts on overcoming basic grammatical errors. In competition with fluent bilinguals, TB speakers usually fare poorly, and any illusions they may have nurtured as to their bilingual abilities will be dissipated as a result. The very presence of Spanish TB

speakers may represent an embarrassment to Hispanic groups seeking to improve their image in the educational environment as speakers of legitimate and fully developed varieties of Spanish, since TB speakers are normally grouped with fluent bilinguals, and their errors and low achievement on tests and assignments have been used as evidence of the deterioration of all forms of Spanish in the United States.

6.2. The transitional bilingual vis-à-vis standardized tests

The identification and diagnosis of vestigial and TB speakers of Spanish is not contemplated in most standardized achievement and placement tests, which attempt to distinguish true Spanish native speakers or bilinguals from those who have learned Spanish as a second language, normally in an academic environment. Fluent bilinguals, regardless of degree of formal education in Spanish and control of universally accepted standards of vocabulary, grammar and spelling, excel on oral comprehension and production examinations, and normally do quite well on reading comprehension and written compositions, albeit with orthographical errors and nonstandard usage on the latter. Fluent bilinguals with no formal training in Spanish may do poorly on sections heavily weighted toward standard forms. Proficient foreign learners of Spanish are expected to do well on standardized usage tests, may exhibit some errors on written composition and with some reading passages, and will probably be weakest on oral portions, if the Spanish language has been learned in typical school environments, which stress grammatical practice and group responses rather than true oral fluency. The abilities of vestigial or TB speakers range over a wider spectrum, but error-types and frequencies tend toward the foreign language speaker category, since significant errors in verb conjugation, adjectival concordance and overall syntactic patterns may be found in written compositions and in grammatical drills. On the other hand, TB speakers' passive oral skills are frequently far superior to those of the foreign language learner, in ways that do not emerge from short, tightly structured oral comprehension tests. For example, although TB speakers' listening skills may not exceed those of the foreign language learner under conditions of careful diction and simple vocabulary, superior results can be noted when switching to colloquial styles, with imperfect pronunciation or extremely rapid or highly regional speech, although such configurations rarely appear on tests designed for a broad spectrum of native and foreign speakers of Spanish. Careful observation of the

speech of TB speakers often reveals 'authentic errors,' that is, deviations from standard pronunciation or usage which are made by native speakers, but infrequently or not at all by foreign language learners. Since these regional/popular items rarely if ever appear on placement or achievement tests, their presence or absence in the speech of foreign language learners and TB speakers cannot be determined through standardized test scores. Possessing active and passive abilities in the colloquial/regional linguistic domain is, however, a considerable advantage which TB speakers do not share with most foreign language learners, and which enables the former to function well in improvised interpretation, as well as understanding partially overheard conversations, jokes, the speech of the elderly and those with speech impediments. Practical competence tests such as those employed by FSI and ACTFL (e. g. the Oral Proficiency Interview) more adequately address the potential viability of TB speakers in realistic communication situations.

The implicational data presented in Table 1 suggest that most such speakers are more feasibly placed in courses for bilingual speakers, given superior passive and lexical skills. At the same time, diagnosis of grammatical skills and identification of error types which are not usually found among fluent bilinguals, should form part of the entrance procedure, if adequate achievement is to be assured. Given significant language shifts in the direction of English among most United States Hispanic communities, coupled with the greater social, geographical and educational mobility of Hispanic families, the pool of vestigial and TB speakers of Spanish is probably growing rapidly; in some areas, TB speakers may actually outnumber fluent bilinguals, or at the least be more visible to the general public. Pedagogical practices and textbooks which fail to account for the TB speaker population shortchange the human potential present in individuals who speak a second language with quasi-native abilities, in an era when international contacts are being promoted and multilingual/multicultural educational models are prominent.

7. Conclusions

The preceding remarks have attempted to demonstrate some possible linguistic criteria for identifying vestigial or TB Spanish speakers. The results in themselves are not adequate to effect such a classification, since

both TB speakers and second-language speakers cover a wide range of proficiency. Hopefully, one avenue of approach has been demonstrated, and future research into the recognizable domain of vestigial or TB Spanish promises to be of significance not only for theoretical linguistics and dialectology but also for general language teaching methodology.

Notes

1. For a representative sample of relevant opinions and research, cf. the following: Bernstein (1974), Attinasi (1977), Bills—Ornstein (1976), Bowen (1977, 1976), Castel (1974), Cohen (1976), Craddock (1973, 1976), Dvorak (1983), Floyd (1978, 1981), García (1977, 1981, 1982), Granda (1968), Gutiérrez (1979), Hart-González (1985), Hensey (1973, 1976), Lantolf (1983), Lipski (1975, 1976, 1984, 1985a, 1985c, 1985e, 1990), Lloréns (1971), Milán (1982), Ornstein (1972, 1975, Peñalosa (1980), Penfield—Ornstein (1985), Pérez Sala (1971), Pousada—Poplack (1982), Rael (1939), Reyes (1976, 1981), Sánchez (1972, 1983), Silva-Corvalán (1982, 1986), Varela (1974, 1978, 1979). Coppieters (1987) offers a theoretical perspective on some typological differences between native and quasi-native behavior in French, with conclusions which are also applicable to Spanish.
2. Cf. Armistead (1978, 1983, 1985), Armistead—Gregory (1986), Dorian (1977, 1983), Lipski (1985c, 1986a, 1987), MacCurdy (1950), Mohan—Zador (1986), Moodie (forthcoming).
3. C. Solé (1979, 1982), Y. Solé (1975), Attinasi (1977), Peñalosa (1980), Sánchez (1983), Lantolf (1983), Saltarelli—Gonzo (1977).
4. Although the Houston area contains numerous examples of a wide variety of Spanish dialects, speakers in the first two categories were of all of Mexican, Cuban or Puerto Rican origin, in order to guarantee consistency of data and to reduce confusion between regional/social variants and discrepancies caused by language erosion. Similarly, the individuals who learned Spanish as a second language were also chosen from the Houston area, from among individuals whose principal contacts with the Spanish language (other than classroom situations) has been with Mexican or Mexican-American varieties. The ages of the informants varied widely, from a minimum of 17 to a maximum of 62, although the majority of the informants were clustered around the 20–30 age range. The ratio of men to women was approximately 4 to 3; no special attempt was made to balance the sex ratio, since there is no evidence that speaker sex is correlated with the grammatical deviations to be explored. Each speaker was interviewed either by myself or by one of a small group of

graduate students (all fluent bilingual Hispanic-Americans) participating in a seminar in sociolinguistics, who had received previous training in interview methods. The average duration of each conversation was 30 minutes, and tape recordings were made of the conversation. The 30 interviews chosen for close study come from a much larger corpus collected in a similar fashion over the last four years, and which includes more than 200 recorded interviews with Spanish speakers from the three categories. In general, the informants were not aware of the precise nature of the study, but rather spoke on a wide variety of topics dealing with school, family and community life, and on the social and personal circumstances under which Spanish and English were learned. At no point were explicit metalinguistic questions asked, and no questionnaire was employed, in order to maximize spontaneity. Subsequent to the initial data collection, selected interviews were transcribed wholly or in part, and the results submitted to quantitative analysis, to be detailed below. The principal purpose of the initial interviews was, however, not the collection of rigorous quantitative findings, but rather the demonstration of global patterns, and of the feasibility of basing a speaker typology on certain types of grammatical structures.

5. The issues of Spanish pro-drop in first and second-language acquisition, and of backward anaphora in general, are immensely complex and are the subject of intensive research on several fronts. To the best of my knowledge, none of the results or research programs has been applied to TB speakers or vestigial speakers of any language; my own research is currently directed toward the interaction of Spanish TB speakers and the prodrop parameter(s), and of anaphoric relations. A composite of relevant materials is found in the following studies, most of which address Spanish/English parametric differences, but none of which deals with bilingual or vestigial Spanish speakers: Cantero (1976, 1978); Flynn (1987a, 1987b); Goodluck (1987); Hilles (1986); Hyams (1986, 1987); Liceras (1986, 1989), Lipski (forthcoming), Luján (1985); Lust (1981); Lust—Gifford (1986); Lust et. al. (1980); Morales (1986a, 1986b); Padilla Rivera (1990); Phinney (1987, 1988); Rigau (1986); Solan (1981, 1983, 1987); Suñer (1982, 1986); White (1985, 1987, 1989).
6. Cf. the following: P. Cohen (1971, 1976), Fuentes de Ho (1976), Gifford (1973), González—Benavides (1982), Granda (1979), Hagerty (1979), Herzfeld (1982), Holm (1978, 1982), Jones (1976), Lipski (1985b, 1986b), Meliá (1974), Muysken (1981), Pap (1949), Quant—Irigoyen (1980), Siade (1974), Usher de Herberos (1976), Welti (1979).

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